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ABSTRACT

Those who wish to expand communication programs in community colleges often have opportunities to develop special courses related to career programs. The speech communication educator offers information on a critical process of human behavior that should be shared with as many as possible, particularly those who are preparing for service occupations where interpersonal relationships are important. Speech communication programs can ge presented in precise instructional modules which are of particular value to the career education specialists. A program can best be developed by outlining descriptions of communication demands in specific occupations. The communication educator could then identify communication behaviors for each occupational role, indicate conditions under which they would be enacted, specify the relative importance of communication behaviors, and provide instructional modules suitable for each individual and his career goals. This role-context approach offers many possibilities for integrating a speech communication program into career education. (RN)

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CAREER COMMUNICATION AND THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

John Muchmore

The continuing expansion of the community college provides the speech-communication educator with immediate access to career communication. The recent and staggering growth of the community college has paralleled the emerging concern over vocational, technical and career education. Accordingly, career education has become an integral part of the community college curriculum. A 1973 bulletin of the Illinois Junior College Board reported the existence of 64 separate career programs in the state's community colleges.

One might argue, and argue with some force, that the individuals in these programs should be exposed to the same speech curriculum that is presented to any other student in the institution. In many institutions, this is the case. A common basic speech course remains a degree requirement. Career programs, however, have a certain sense of independence and will not long feel compelled to respond to requirements of the past. Those who coordinate such programs are increasingly reluctant to introduce courses outside the limits of the career specialty unless the relevance of those courses is demonstrated.

The alternatives which exist; (1) to seek a mandate which would make speech-communication courses universal requirements; (2) to hope that the merit of the specific courses and the instruction that prevailed in those courses

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would be such that people would come to them of their own volition, and (3) to develop separate course for every occupational area strike me as being unacceptable. It was this judgement that led to my pursuing the matter of how to best introduce speech-communication education material to career programs. The purpose of this presentation is to share a fourth alternative, an alternative approach to the introduction and integration of speech-communication education to career education.

Initially, there are certain assumptions that underlie the approach which is to be advocated. The first of these might be left unsaid, but I feel that its importance is such that it ought to be presented. The speech-communication educator has access to information regarding a critical process in human behavior, and it imperative that such information be shared with the greatest possible number of people. Second, there are those who see career education as temporary emphasis. There is, however, some considerable information to indicate that quite the opposite is true. In an often cited address,[1] Sidney Marland, Jr., former U.S. Commissioner of Education demonstrated the degree of commitment which the federal government has made to the concept. Marland's 1971 remarks described a program which would have broad impact on society, and Congresswoman Edith Green indicated that career education would be

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[1]Sidney Marland, Jr. "Career Education -- More than a Name." An address reprinted in Career Communication: Directions for the Seventies. (New York: Speech Communication Association, 1972), 3-10.

the beneficiary of considerable financial support from the government.[2] Thus, despite articulate detractors such as columnist Sydney J. Harris, who bluntly asserted that vocational training is not education,[3] the die is cast.

Contemporary social forces, as well as anticipated forces compound the critical quality of the need for the integration of speech-communication into career education. There are varied phenomena which demonstrate the meaning of this assertion. For example, there is an increasing tendency for there to be significant cleavage between occupational roles and family roles. In Future Shock, Toffler speaks of the business executive who splits his week and functions as an executive in New York Monday through Friday and then returns to his Ohio family for the weekends. There are increasing numbers of experiments with three and four day work weeks, and the growth of recreational communities which are close enough to a person's work to be accessible at work's end but distant enough to provide excape is astounding. Likewise, there is continued growth in service occupations. Interestingly, one of the outgrowths of the increase in service occupations is the fact that many persons with very narrow training experiences are being thrust into situations where success and failure are contingent upon maintenance of effective interpersonal relationships. One of the most interesting elements of this

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[2] Edith Green, "People, Jobs and Federal Priorities," Compact, IV (August, 1970).

[3] Sydney J. Harris, "Vocational Training Not Education," Chicago Daily News, (March 10, 1973), 8.

condition is that in certain occupational areas, the person least knowledgeable about communication will be the person who will have greatest influence on occupational or professional relationships. For example, as medicine pursues the current emphasis on becoming a preventive art rather than a remedial one, and the doctor's skills are concentrated on those who are most in need of remediation, the preventive aspect will be taken over by nurses, para-medics, and office personnel. The extreme of this situation occurs when the answering service becomes a temporary diagnostic agent. An additional phenomenon which must be dealt with is the increasing tendency for individuals to make career changes during the course of their lifetimes. Such changes, even if they are limited to shifts in responsibilities within a particular career area, require that opportunities to acquire new skills and new knowledge be made easily available to individuals.

A fourth assumption is that speech-communication programs can be presented in precisely defined instructional modules. This is an area which deserves additional attention, but there are presently a number of indiviuals and institutions commited to the concept. For example, the ERIC system offers Valencia's description of modular scheduling, a report that conceives of the module in terms of time, and in the geographical area of Chicago and suburbs, there are numerous examples of module conceived of in terms of material. Illinois High School District #214 has implemented the concept with

considerable success. For purposes of demonstration, consider this list of ten possible instructional modules, all of which have been derived from textbooks frequently employed in a basic, college speech-communication course:

Anxiety Reduction
Audience Analysis
Basic Concepts of Communication
Nonverbal Communication
Conducting a Meeting
Interviewing
Presentational Speaking
Perception
Listening
Introduction to Small Groups

The titles are tentative, and the list of possible modules is barely tapped but it should give some indication of the kinds of more precise units into which the speech-communication curriculum might be structured.

With these assumptions stated, let us turn to a brief explanation of the proposed approach to the introduction of speech-communication to career education. That approach would first concentrate on generating a detailed description of communication behaviors required by certain occupations by focusing on two specific elements -- role and context of situation. The initial task would be to develop a careful description of the communication demands imposed on

the individual when he or she chooses to perform a particular occupational role. The second task would be to identify the contexts of situation in which the various role behaviors might be enacted. The resulting information could be distributed on a matrix and would allow the speech-communication educator to (1) identify communication behaviors necessary for performance of the role; (2) provide an indication of the conditions under which those roles would be enacted; (3) place an estimate of relative importance on the varied communication behaviors, and (4) prescribe a collection of instructional modules that would be most meaningful for the particular individual. Likewise, the basic description would allow the individual to make decisions concerning instructional units which might be of especial importance to him or her.

Time limits the amount of detail which can be offered in explanation of exactly how to generate the description. Hence, the approach is outlined in only brief terms. That proposed approach would consist of a three level analysis of a particular occupation. Such an analysis would generate a description of the role and component roles by considering (1) role prescriptions, (2) role expectations and (3) role descriptions. These labels are drawn from Berlo's work and are reinforced by many other discussions of role, notably one offered by Bates. In the first case, the researcher would examine existing literature which might tell how the role "ought" to be performed. This literature

would include such materials as licensing regulations and textbook descriptions. In the second case, the researcher would go to those who are performing the role and solicit an indication of their expectations as to how the role ought to be performined. Here, questionnaires and interviews would furnish considerable information. Third, the researcher would observe role practitioners in action and describe a pattern of actual behavior. The process of identifying contexts of situation would be executed in much the same manner.

Perhaps the degree of concern which I have for the issue of the proper relationship between speech-communication and career education as well as the degree of interest I hold in a role-context approach to the definition of that relationship have become obvious by this point. That concern and interest led me to pursue this particular topic with considerable energy and resulted in a study that sought to (1) establish the merit of applying role and context of situation analyses to occupational categories and then to (2) demonstrate the viability of such an approach by applying it to a particular occupational category. The occupational category of professional dental hygienist became the point of focus and a three level analysis yielded a clear picture of the role demands of the occupation and provided the basic information necessary to specify the contexts of situation in which those role demands might be operative. In brief

Summary, the analysis demonstrated the relatively intimate nature of the occupational role as well as demonstrating that the majority of the role behaviors would be enacted in a physically confined context of situation. This information supported the assertion that certain instructional modules would have substantially greater application than would others.

Even though the demonstration was developed in considerable detail, it remains true that such a description can never be considered final. Nevertheless, this approach does provide a manner by which speech-communication education can be effectively integrated into career education

The degree of detail which would be necessary in varied occupational analyses would be contigent upon the complexity of the occupational category. For example, the role of the law enforcement officer appears to be comprised of a larger number of component roles that that of the dental hygienist and almost certainly would be executed in a larger number of contexts. Still, a summary description of necessary and desirable communication behaviors can be generated. A collection of these descriptions, when developed in response to an established set of instructional modules will serve a number of purposes. Most notably, they would provide the basis for conveying necessary information to those who most need it. Likewise, the introduction of such a structure would allow practical production of supportive materials by providing publishers a basis for modular

publishing.

These remarks have offered a brief summary of materials which I have been very close to for some time. Accordingly, they are exciting to me. I hope the comments have conveyed some of that excitement to you.

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